

MASONRY IN PRUSSIA.

As Russia is bound up with the memory of Peter the Great, so is Prussia indissolubly united to the fame of Frederick the Second. Both autocrats—but in widely different senses—these men have stamped the impress of their several geniuses on the world's history. The one was admired for his persistent hardihood, the other for his remarkable courage. To the former has been assigned an enigmatical position in the world's great story; of the other a "plain unvarnished tale" has been told. Both deserve our respect, the latter alone our esteem. But there is a subtle analogy between these two monarchs, who fought, each according to his light, against evil and darkness, well worthy of consideration. Reverse the centuries, and the two men in the same position would have done the same. Peter, from a great brute mass, formed a nation—a Russia worth thinking about. Frederick, with an instinct possessed by few men of his time, smelt the Revolution, stemmed its torrent, and brought into existence the most intellectual and enlightened monarchy the world has seen in these confused latter days. Peter knew nothing of, and had he known, would have rejected Freemasonry as quite at variance with his ideas of autocracy. Frederick, though at peril of his life, accepted it. He saw in it a refuge from the perplexing problems of his time; it formed a barrier against the skeptical philosophy of Baron Holbach; it supplied a means of escape from the generalizations of Lamarck, and it pointed to that road which leads to advancement in an intellectual and moral sense. It inspired his actions in peace; it invigorated, while it chastened, his fierceness in war. There is no spectacle more noteworthy than that of this sad king, whose wars were made that peace might prevail; who wasted lands that they might become fertile; and whose latest and last efforts were devoted to the consolidation of the materials he had gathered by supreme suffering. He was a Mason in that great sense so desirable to be understood by the mere crowd of initiates we now see about us, flaunting ornaments wherever banquets are spread, and "doing the philanthropic" because they hope it may lead them to advancement.

Let us revert for a moment to Peter of Russia. Brute in passion he undoubtedly was; but whoever that has seen Tartar races of our present time can doubt that he, by force of will—by strenuous exertion—humanized that which was Scythion before his day? He too was Masonic, but Masonic unawares. If any one remembers the state of the government of Kostroma, an interior circle of Russia, only fifteen years ago—if they can tell anything about the licenses and enormities then, even, committed—they may form some conception of what Russia might have been before the patient carpenter of Deptford set his shoulder to the wheel of State.